

who comes at 4 o'clock. on this
street of poets everyday
everyone hopes the mail will
be good, rewarding, announce
the prize, offer the trip
to Las Vegas, be a surprise,
a sunrise, but the mailman
in our neighborhood is the
grim reaper, hauling on his
back invitations to nothing
and nothing but rejection.

-- Michael Basinski

Buffalo NY

FOREMAN FIRED JOE

We called them cookie-cutters --
huge presses punching out
their little steel cookies.
You stand on a platform
and feed blank discs into two presses,
running back and forth
to keep them both loaded.
Used to be a two-man job
till a new-hire who didn't know better
fed both presses at once
and the job got re-classified.

I did that job one day in summer heat.
Running back and forth like that,
sweat soaking my coveralls, shoes,
I started hating myself on that platform.
But I needed the money
so I kept feeding
till I slipped and fell.
Another worker stopped the presses.

I ran to the bathroom and soaked
my body in water. Foreman yelled
but I had blood to show.
Driving home, I swore I'd quit
before I did that job again.

When Joe walked off that job
and got fired, the union didn't do
anything -- he didn't have his 90 days in.
I wanted to quit in support
but I wiped my hands,
took his place up there.